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**Kotlus**

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(54) **3D DESIGN AND FABRICATION SYSTEM FOR IMPLANTS**

(2013.01); *G06T 2200/08* (2013.01); *G06T 2219/2021* (2013.01); *B29C 67/0059* (2013.01)

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC ..... 623/17.16, 17.11  
See application file for complete search history.

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(56)

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

*A61F 2/44* (2006.01)

*A61F 2/02* (2006.01)

*A61F 2/30* (2006.01)

*G06T 19/20* (2011.01)

*B29C 67/00* (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

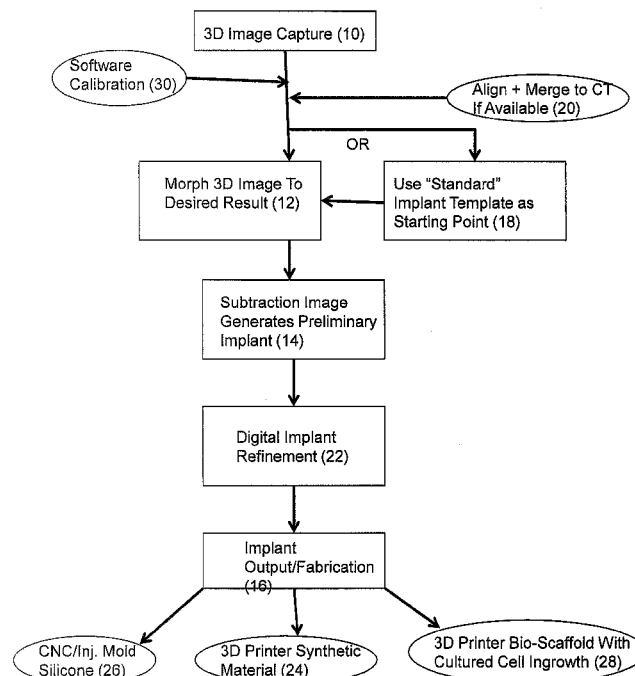
CPC . *A61F 2/442* (2013.01); *A61F 2/02* (2013.01);  
*Y10T 29/49* (2015.01); *A61F 2/30942*  
(2013.01); *A61F 2/44* (2013.01); *G06T 19/20*

(57)

**ABSTRACT**

A method of designing, presenting, generating, and fabricating custom implants by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, and fabricating a real 3D implant. A method of implanting a custom implant in a patient, by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, fabricating a real 3D implant, and implanting the implant in the patient. A method of correcting disfigurement in a patient. A method of replacing a disc in a patient's back. The present invention also provides for an implant fabricated by this method.

**15 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets**



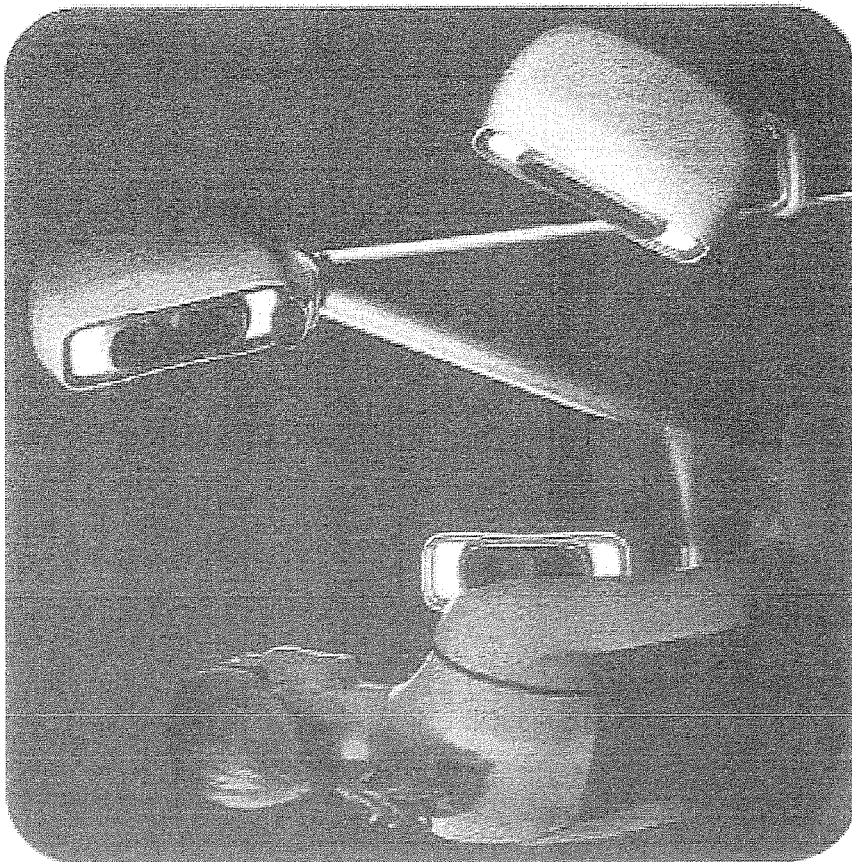


FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2A

FIGURE 2B

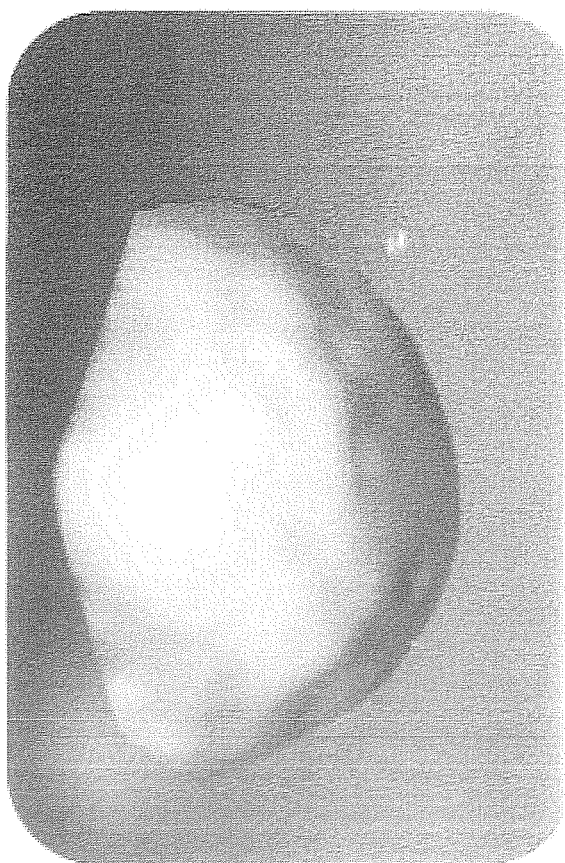


FIGURE 3

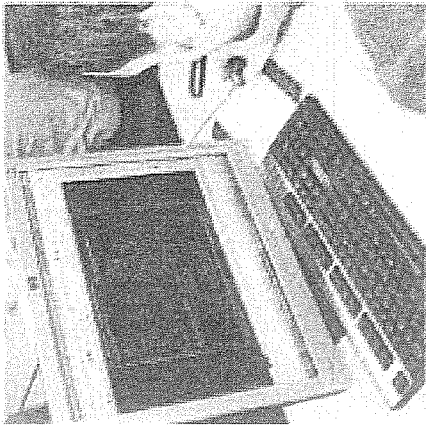


FIGURE 4

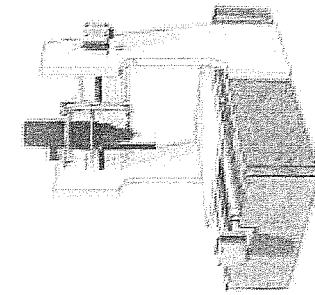


FIGURE 5B

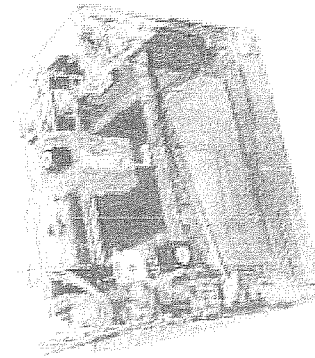
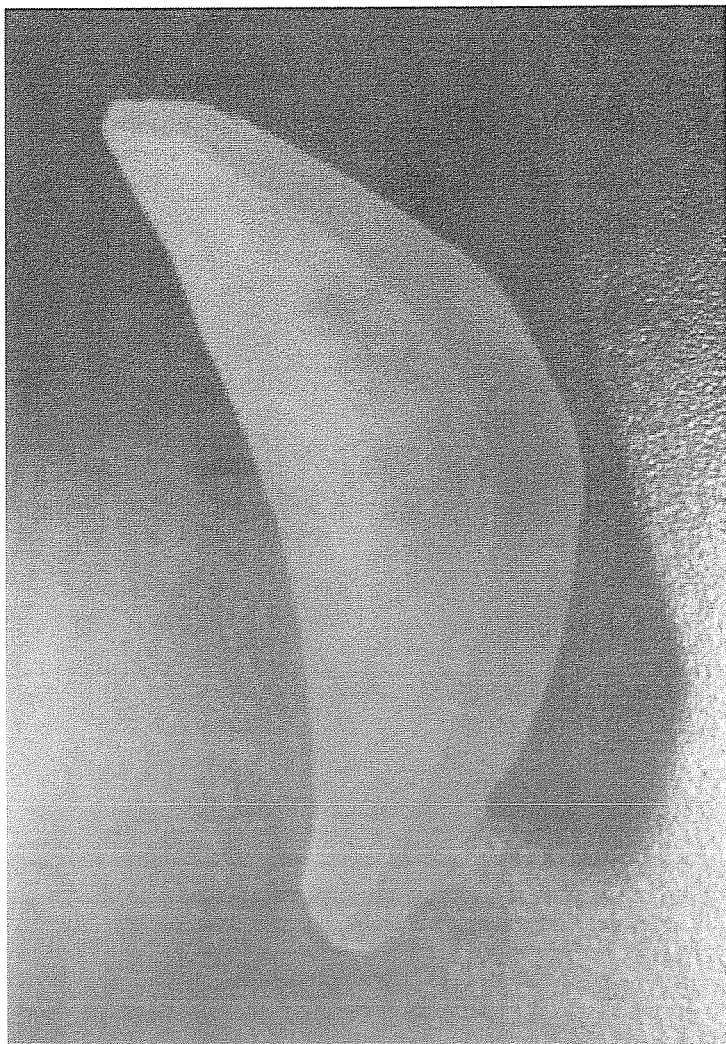


FIGURE 5A



**FIGURE 6**

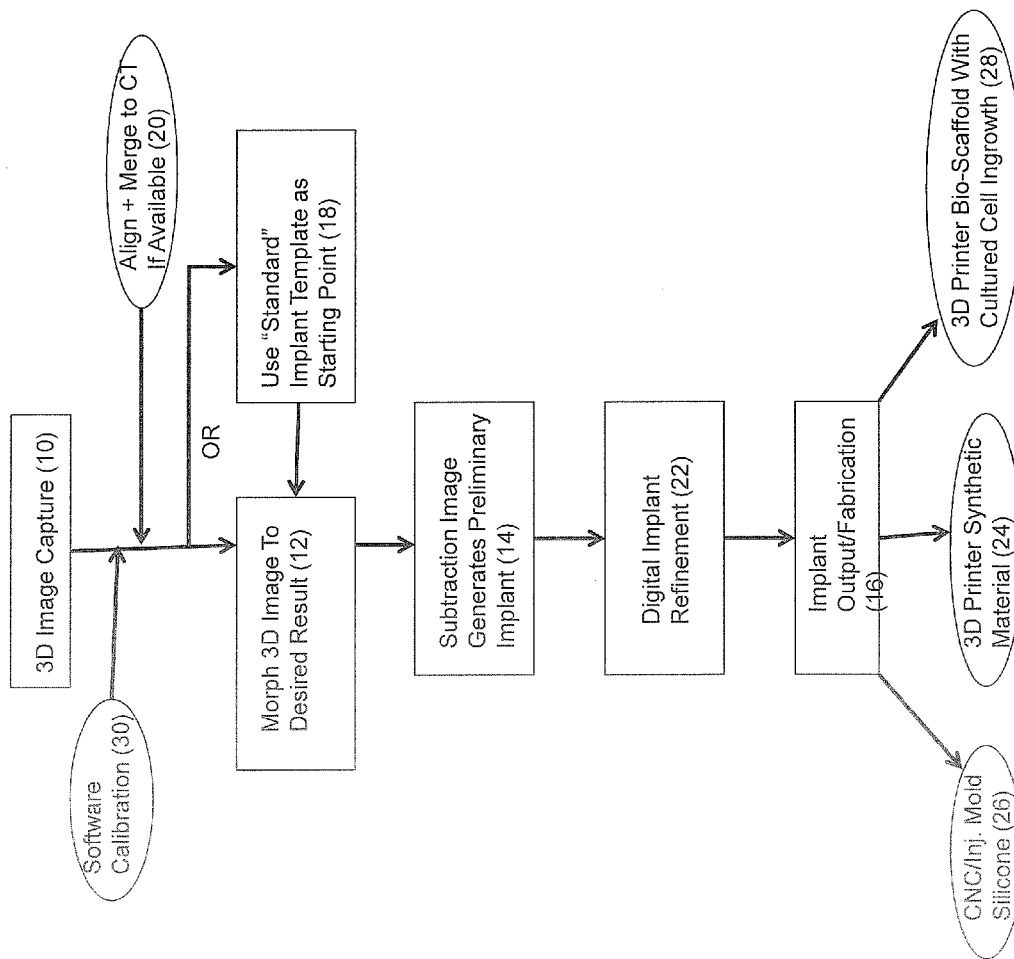


FIGURE 7

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### 3D DESIGN AND FABRICATION SYSTEM FOR IMPLANTS

#### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

##### 1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to methods of fabricating aesthetic and reconstructive surgical implants. More specifically, the present invention relates to methods of generating custom implants.

##### 2. Background Art

After serious injury or disease, restoration of normal function, symmetry, and appearance can require surgery involving implanting materials to reshape the affected area of the body. Implants are also used to augment the shape and volume of normal anatomic regions of the body for aesthetic purposes. For the most part, commonly used implants are generic, pre-fabricated shapes and sizes that must be fit to each individual as best as they can. In other words, the majority of implants available are not specifically tailored to a patient and do not take normal asymmetry or other unique qualities into account.

There are several methods of generating implants that are currently used. U.S. Pat. No. 7,747,305 to Dean, et al. is one particular method of generating an implant based on a 3D CT scan. The '305 patent discloses a computer aided design method for producing an implant for a patient prior to operation comprising the steps of: generating data with a non-invasive 3D (3-dimensional) scan of the patient's defect site that digitally represents the area that will receive the implant; designing and validating an implant on a computer based on digital data generated from a volume image of the patient; and fabricating the implant based solely on the implant design data generated on computer.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0212158 to Miller generally discloses a device and method of manufacturing and implanting a custom subtalar arthroereisis implant having side surfaces, which are mirrored in topography with the sinus tarsi of a patient. The implant is formed using images of the patient standing in a weight bearing position with their sinus tarsi and the surrounding bone structure in an anatomically correct alignment. These 3D images can be obtained by a CAT scanner or an MRI device. Formation of the implant can be accomplished by three dimensional printers or computer driven mills. Once implanted, the implant urges and maintains the anatomically correct alignment thereby minimizing any patient tendency for abnormal motion between said patient's talus and calcaneus.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0212158 to Feldman generally discloses a device and method of manufacturing and implanting a custom subtalar arthroereisis implant having side surfaces, which are mirrored in topography with the sinus tarsi of a patient. The implant is formed using images of the patient standing in a weight bearing position with their sinus tarsi and the surrounding bone structure in an anatomically correct alignment. These 3D images can be obtained by a CAT scanner or MRI device. Once the image is sent to the computer, 3D modeling software (with physics modeling) can be used (Mimics Software Suite Materialise) to modify the implant. The implant can be formed by a three-dimensional printer or CNC machine. Once implanted, the implant urges and maintains the anatomically correct alignment thereby minimizing any patient tendency for abnormal motion between said patient's talus and calcaneus.

Custom implants can be developed from MRI or CT scans as in the methods above; however, they have several draw-

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backs. Patients receive radiation from CT scans and both MRI and CT scans are quite expensive to perform. The implants must generally be fabricated off-site at a laboratory or manufacturing location with injection molding and require a turn-around time of several days to several weeks. They can be unshaped materials (blocks) that are carved by hand, which is tedious and inaccurate. They do not allow for visualization of a simulated surgical outcome. Also, they do not allow for customization with virtual 3D external photographs. They do not visually predict the soft tissue modifications that will occur after implantation.

Therefore, there remains a need for a method of complete customization of an implant for a patient with on-site implant creation within hours that is lower cost than present methods.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides for a method of designing, presenting, generating, and fabricating custom implants by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, and fabricating a real 3D implant.

The present invention provides for a method of implanting a custom implant in a patient, by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, fabricating a real 3D implant, and implanting the implant in the patient.

The present invention also provides for a method of correcting disfigurement in a patient, by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, fabricating a real 3D implant, and implanting the implant in the patient and correcting the disfigurement.

The present invention further provides for a method of replacing a disc in a patient's back, by obtaining a 3D image of an intervertebral space in the back, simulating volumetric changes of the intervertebral space, generating a virtual 3D disc, fabricating a real 3D disc, and implanting the disc in the patient's back.

The present invention also provides for an implant fabricated by this method.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other advantages of the present invention are readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a photograph of generating an external 3D image in the method of the present invention;

FIGS. 2A and 2B are photographs of simulating volumetric changes of the implant site;

FIG. 3 is an image of a virtual 3D implant;

FIG. 4 is a photograph showing making adjustments with a CAD file;

FIG. 5A is an image of a 3D printer and FIG. 5B is an image of a CNC machine;

FIG. 6 is a photograph of an implant prepared by the method of the present invention; and

FIG. 7 is a flow chart of the method of the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is generally directed to a method of designing, presenting, generating, and fabricating custom implants, preferably for use in humans, based on 3D imaging. The customization is based on individual anatomic findings,



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taking into account pre-existing asymmetries, unique structures, and desired modifications, thus obviating the need for generic implants.

More specifically, the method includes obtaining a 3D image of a site or area of the body to receive an implant **10**,  
simulating volumetric changes of the site **12**, generating a  
virtual 3D implant **14**, and fabricating a real 3D implant **16**.  
These steps are generally shown in FIG. 7. The present invention  
also provides for an implant fabricated by this method.

There are several ways that a 3D image can be obtained. As  
shown in FIG. 1, multiple still digital photographs are taken  
from various angles of a site or area of the body on the patient  
that is to receive the implant. Several cameras can be used to  
take the photographs. For example, six digital cameras (such  
as by Canfield Scientific, Inc.) can be used to capture images  
of the site. A 3D camera can be used but any other camera can  
also be used along with software that can integrate images  
from different angles to obtain a 3D image. Any other suitable  
combination of cameras can be used to obtain a 3D image. For  
example, a smartphone, tablet, or a video camera can be used  
to obtain still images that can be used to generate a 3D image.  
Alternatively, a 3D scanner can be used to obtain the 3D  
image by scanning the site. The 3D scanner moves around the  
patient to capture the 3D surface information in order to  
obtain the 3D image. The scanner can be a laser, infrared, or  
light type of scanner. Whether cameras or scanners are used,  
the 3D image can be stored on the device itself with computer  
readable media and/or sent to a computer via wireless or  
wired signals and stored with computer readable media  
directly on the computer.

Next, volumetric changes of the site or area of the body are  
simulated on the external photo (as shown in FIGS. 2A and  
2B with the chin area) and can be displayed to the patient.  
Preferably, this is done by morphing tools on a computer. For  
example, the morphing tool can be Canfield Mirror (Canfield  
Scientific, Inc.), or any other suitable morphing software.  
These morphing tools can be calibrated as necessary by one  
skilled in the art (shown at **30** in FIG. 7). The desired shape of  
the implant can be simulated with the morphing tools alone.  
In other words, the implant can be generated by morphing an  
area of the body of patient with the morphing tools in the  
computer software, and based on the adjustments to the body,  
the computer software can determine and calculate what the  
implant needs to look like (i.e. size and shape). A suitable  
standard implant to use can be determined and selected by the  
computer software, and then the standard implant can be  
adjusted to customize the fit by the fabrication methods  
described below. The subtraction of before and after morphing  
results in a difference model, which is the basis for the  
implant shape and size. Alternatively, based on the calculations,  
a completely custom implant can be created instead of  
starting with a standard implant. The software uses physics  
modeling to simulate external appearances and predicts the  
influence of the implant on the surrounding structures and  
tissues.

Alternatively, the morphing tools can include the use of  
pre-determined standard implant shapes that are pre-loaded  
in the software that can be modified after simulated implan-  
tation (shown at **18** in FIG. 7). In other words, the starting  
point for morphing the patient's body can be a standard  
implant shape. From here, the 3D image can be morphed to  
customize the standard implant shape and achieve the desired  
result in the patient's body. For example, further changes to  
the standard implant can modify the anterior surface of the  
proposed implant, which the shape of the posterior surface  
remains as the "standard" curvature. In other words, the soft-

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ware uses physics modeling to simulate external appearance  
and predicts the influence of the implant on the surrounding  
structures and tissues.

Regardless of whether the patient's body is morphed first  
from the software, or whether a standard implant is chosen  
and subsequently adjusted, the present invention is advanta-  
geous over methods in the prior art because the resulting look  
from the morphed 3D image can be displayed to the patient  
and they can decide if they do not find the implant acceptable  
or to their liking, and adjustments can be made in real time  
until they are satisfied and approve of the morphed 3D image.

Another alternative is to take and use a CT or MRI image  
for an externally captured image of the patient to determine  
the posterior surface of the implant and the 3D image  
obtained in the above step to determine the anterior surface of  
the implant. The 3D photographic image can also be aligned  
with a 3D CT image (shown at **20** in FIG. 7) so that both  
images can be used at the same time to determine how the  
implant interacts with bone and how the implant interacts  
with soft tissue. Internal images can also be captured with CT,  
MRI, cone beam scan, or ultrasound and can further be used  
to aid in obtaining an image of the site. Any of these additional  
images can be merged and aligned with each other (i.e. exter-  
nal images merged and aligned with internal images, etc.)

The morphing tools can also include complete customiza-  
tion by use of bulge and warp tools to modify the 3D external  
image and an implant can be created based on the determined  
difference volume between the original image and the mor-  
phed image. Further modifications can be made to the isolated  
difference model.

Next, a virtual 3D implant is generated by a computer  
software tool that achieves the desired volume and contour  
change, as shown in FIG. 3. This software tool can be the  
same as that used in the previous step, or it can be any other  
suitable computer software. The 3D implant is viewed in the  
software and adjustments and refinements can be made to the  
dimensions and checked against the patient's 3D images to  
achieve the final design, as shown in FIG. 4 and shown at **22**  
in FIG. 7. Any suitable desired changes can be made at this  
point, such as, but not limited to, shape, dimension, edges,  
size, and projection. After the changes and refinements, the  
implant is "re-simulated" in the original presurgical imaging  
performed above and shown to the patient. Further adjust-  
ments with the morphing tools as above can be performed and  
the adjustments and refinements can be performed repeatedly  
until the patient is satisfied and the ideal implant is achieved.  
The virtual 3D implant (and any other required information)  
is saved on computer readable media (preferably in the form  
of a CAD file). The file is then sent to a fabrication machine  
via wireless or wired communication.

At this point, optionally, the implant can be fabricated with  
plastic, acrylic, or other test material for confirmation before  
the final manufacturing. The surrounding tissue/structures/  
skeleton of the patient can also be fabricated in synthetic  
material for use in pre-surgical and/or intraoperative plan-  
ning. A CNC machine can be used or a 3D printer for these  
steps.

The real 3D implant is fabricated from the virtual 3D  
implant with a biocompatible material using the fabrication  
machine. The method of the present invention generally uses  
the computer software in order to control robotics to produce  
an implant. The fabrication machine can be either a 3D printer  
(FIG. 5A, **24** in FIG. 7) or a CNC machine (FIG. 5B, **26** in  
FIG. 7). A 3D printer uses an additive method of fabrication in  
order to generate the 3D implant. A CNC machine uses a  
subtractive method in order to carve or mill the material  
directly to generate the 3D implant. Also, the negative image

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can be milled to create a mold that is injected with material that then becomes the final implant. The use of a 3D printer/CNC machine allows for the implant to be fabricated directly in a physician's office or other location. A finished and fabricated implant is shown in FIG. 6.

The materials that can be used can be, but are not limited to, silicone, hard silicone, polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), porous polyethylene, polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), titanium, and hydroxylapatite. The materials can also include those that allow for cultured tissue growth or cell ingrowth, such as a collagen matrix or synthetic live material, bioscaffold, or printed live tissue (shown at 28 in FIG. 7).

After fabrication, the implant can be sterilized and/or prepared for implantation in the patient.

The method of the present invention can be used for any part of the body that requires an implant, such as, but not limited to, the face (chin, cheek, nose, temple, brow, tear trough, orbital rim, orbit, mandible, skull, etc.), the body (the knees, the elbows, chest, breast, buttocks, calf, etc.), or skeletal (joint, spine or back, etc.). The FIGURES in particular show an example of a chin implant.

The method of the present invention can be used in many different applications for which implants are desired or needed, both for aesthetic reasons as well as functional and therapeutic reasons. The method can be used for disfigurement, whether one that the patient was born with or is caused by accident or disease. The method can be used for improvement of physical features.

Most generally, the present invention provides for a method of implanting a custom implant in a patient, by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, fabricating a real 3D implant, and implanting the implant in the patient.

The present invention also provides for a method of correcting disfigurement in a patient, by obtaining a 3D image of a site to receive an implant, simulating volumetric changes of the site, generating a virtual 3D implant, fabricating a real 3D implant, and implanting the implant in the patient and correcting the disfigurement.

Another example of an implant that can be generated from this method is a disc replacement for the back. By using this method, a standard disc implant can be adjusted to fit the patient perfectly in customized fit in order to expand the intervertebral space. Alternatively, a completely custom implant can also be fabricated according to the steps described above.

Therefore, the present invention provides for a method of replacing a disc in a patient's back, by obtaining a 3D image of an intervertebral space in the back, simulating volumetric changes of the intervertebral space, generating a virtual 3D disc, fabricating a real 3D disc, and implanting the disc in the patient's back.

There are several advantages to the method of the present invention. This method improves on previous approaches by creating complete bespoke customization of implants with on-site implant creation within hours, instead of days or weeks. The method allows the physician to view the effects of the implant on soft tissue and how the patient will actually look after the implantation. It predicts how skin, muscle, fat, and soft tissue will appear with the underlying volume modification. It also gives the patient a simulated idea of their external appearance. Furthermore, the physician can morph the external appearance and generate an appropriate implant instead of guessing how the patient will look by modifying the skeletal structure. This method does not necessarily

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require radiation to the patient (unless combined with a CT scan), is much less expensive, and much quicker than previous methods.

Throughout this application, various publications, including United States patents, are referenced by author and year and patents by number. Full citations for the publications are listed below. The disclosures of these publications and patents in their entireties are hereby incorporated by reference into this application in order to more fully describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains.

The invention has been described in an illustrative manner, and it is to be understood that the terminology, which has been used is intended to be in the nature of words of description rather than of limitation.

Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is, therefore, to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention can be practiced otherwise than as specifically described.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of designing, presenting, generating, and fabricating custom implants, including the steps of:

obtaining a three-dimensional (3D) image of a site to receive an implant;

simulating volumetric changes of the site by aligning the 3D image with an image chosen from the group consisting of a 3D CT image and an MRI image;

generating a virtual 3D implant; and

fabricating a real 3D implant.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said obtaining step is further defined as taking digital photographs from various angle of the site.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein six digital cameras are used for taking the digital photographs.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said obtaining step is further defined as taking a 3D scan of the site.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said simulating step further includes the step of displaying the volumetric changes to a patient.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said simulating step is further defined as using morphing tools to simulate volumetric changes of the site.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said simulating step is further defined as selecting a standard implant shape, morphing the 3D image, and customizing the standard implant shape.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said simulating step further includes the step of making real time adjustments to the 3D image and obtaining patient approval.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating step further includes the step of calculating the size and shape of the implant based on the simulated volumetric changes and creating a custom implant.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating step further includes the step of selecting a standard implant and adjusting the fit based on the simulated volumetric changes.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating step further includes the step of refining the 3D implant and checking against the 3D image of the patient.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating step further includes the step of sending information of the 3D implant to a fabrication machine.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said fabricating step is further defined as fabricating the real 3D implant from a machine chosen from the group consisting of a 3D printer and a CNC machine.

**14.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the implant is made of a material chosen from the group consisting of silicone, polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), porous polyethylene, polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), titanium, hydroxylapatite, collagen matrix, synthetic live material, bioscaffold, and printed live tissue. 5

**15.** An implant fabricated by the method of claim **1**.

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